



## Labour Power

Chapter 6 of Capital, Volume 1 is the one where **Karl Marx** pops out the secret of the whole deal – the **Buying and Selling of Labour Power**. The “*Hic Rhodus, Hic Salta*” finishing the previous chapter was fair warning: This is it. This is the heart of the matter.

Here are some highlights:

*“In order to be able to extract value from the consumption of a commodity, our friend, Moneybags, must be so lucky as to find, within the sphere of circulation, in the market, a commodity, whose use-value possesses the peculiar property of being a source of value, whose actual consumption, therefore, is itself an embodiment of labour,*

*and, consequently, a creation of value.*

*“By labour-power or capacity for labour is to be understood the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being, which he exercises whenever he produces a use-value of any description.*

*“...The second essential condition to the owner of money finding labour-power in the market as a commodity is this — that the labourer instead of being in the position to sell commodities in which his labour is incorporated, must be obliged to offer for sale as a commodity that very labour-power, which exists only in his living self.*

*“...For the conversion of his money into capital, therefore, the owner of money must meet in the market with the free labourer, free in the double sense, that as a free man he can dispose of his labour-power as his own commodity, and that on the other hand he has no other commodity for sale, is short of everything necessary for the realisation of his labour-power.”*

The first three paragraphs on page 3 of the downloadable extract linked below are also crucial, and are very surprising at the first reading. And then:

*“...Accompanied by Mr. Moneybags and by the possessor of labour-power, we therefore take leave for a time of this noisy sphere, where everything takes place on the surface and in view of all men, and follow them both into the*

*hidden abode of production, on whose threshold there stares us in the face 'No admittance except on business.' Here we shall see, not only how capital produces, but how capital is produced. We shall at last force the secret of profit making.*

*"He, who before was the money-owner, now strides in front as capitalist; the possessor of labour-power follows as his labourer. The one with an air of importance, smirking, intent on business; the other, timid and holding back, **like one who is bringing his own hide to market and has nothing to expect but — a hiding.**"*

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Capital V1, Chapter 6, Buying and Selling of Labour Power](#).
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